

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 4012

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CE, PK

SUBJ: BHUTTO SEEKS TO STRIKE MODERATE STANCE

1. SUMMARY: FOUR-DAY SRI LANKA VISIT, DEC 16-19, BY PAKISTANS PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO GOT OFF TO SOMEWHAT AWKWARD START WHEN BHUTTO REPUDIATED AT DINNER A SPEECH HE HAD MADE TO NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY SAME AFTERNOON. BHUTTO CLAIMED HE HAD NOT WANTED SPEECH TO INCLUDE REFERENCES TO NEIGHBORS WHICH MIGHT BE CONSIDERED OFFENSIVE. START OF VISIT ALSO MAKRED BY DIPLOMATIC GAFFES. CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDS PROCEEDINGS, HOWEVER, REFLECTING CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN SRI LANKA AND PAKISTAN. END SUMMARY.

2. AT DEC 16 BANQUET GIVEN BY PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE IN HONOR OF VISITING PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER, BHUTTO DEVOTED PORITION HIS REMARKS TO CHASTISING HIS OWN FOREIGN OFFICE FOR SPEECH HE HAD DELIVERED IN AFTERNOON TO SRI LANKA'S NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY. IN PRESENCE OF HIS GLUM FOREIGN SECRETARY, BHUTTO APOLOGIZED FOR EARLIER SPEECH SAYING THAT BEFORE LEAVING ISLAMABAD
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HE HAD INSTRUCTED FOREIGN MINISTRY NOT TO INCLUDE ANYTHING IN SPEECH WHICH WOULD CAUSE OFFENSE TO ANY

OTHER COUNTRIES IN REGION AND TO HIGHLIGHT CORDIAL SRI LANKA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS. BHUTTO DECLARED FOREIGN OFFICE HAD APPARENTLY NOT UNDERSTOOD HIS REQUEST AND RESULT HAD BEEN UNSATISFACTORY SPEECH.

3. ALTHOUGH FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, ASSEMBLY SPEECH DID NOT SEEM EXCESSIVELY IMMODERATE, PRIME MINISTER WAS APPARENTLY REFERRING TO SECTION OF HIS ASSEMBLY SPEECH IN WHICH HE DISCUSSED PAKISTANS EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS ON BASIS OF NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS AND THE SIMLA AGREEMENT. NOTING THAT PAKISTANI FEELINGS OF FRIENDSHIP TOWARDS BANGLADESH SHOULD "SURPRISE NONE, NOR CAUSE ANY ANXIETY IN ANY QUARTER", BHUTTO CONTINUED: "IF THE PRESENT EVENTS IN BANGLADESH VINDICATE THE STAND WE ADOPTED, IT IS A SOURCE OF SATISFACTION TO US ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT IT GIVES A LIE TO THE ALLEGATIONS THAT WERE SO VICIOUSLY MADE AGAINST US IN THE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED ATMOSPHERE OF 1971. WE INTEND TO RESTORE OUR FRIENDLY LINKS WITH BANGLADESH. AT THE SAME TIME WE BELIEVE THE GREATEST SERVICE THAT CAN BE RENDERED TO THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH IS TO KEEP OUT OF THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THEIR COUNTRY. THIS WOULD NOT ONLY BE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF BANGLADESH TO FIND ITS OWN CENTRE OF GRAVITY BY ITS OWN ENDEAVOURS."

4. BHUTTO READ ASSEMBLY SPEECH IN UNINSPIRED MANNER AND IT SEEMS POSSIBLE HE HAD NOT SEEN IT PRIOR TO DELIVERY. MUCH OF SPEECH WAS DEVOTED TO HIS EFFORTS TO GET PAKISTAN BACK ON ITS FEET AFTER ASSUMING OFFICE IN DEC 1971 AND SPEECH ALSO STRESSED COMMONALITY OF PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS SHARED BY PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA. SOME DOUBT WAS LATER CAST ON BHUTTO'S ATTITUDE TOWARD DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS WHEN, IN BANQUET REMARKS SAME EVENING, HE SAID THAT IF FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ENSURING NEEDS OF PEOPLE FOR FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER AND HEALTH CARE ON ONE HAND, AND DEMOCRACY ON OTHER, CONFIDENTIAL
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HE WOULD CHOOSE FORMER.

5. START OF BHUTTO'S VISIT ALSO MARKED BY TWO GAFFES. DIPLOMATIC CORPS WAS PUT IN WRONG BUILDING FOR AIRPORT RECEPTION AND ONLY GOT GLIMPSES OF TWO PRIME MINISTERS AS THEY SPED PAST IN POURING RAIN ON WAY TO COLOMBO. ASSEMBLY SPEAKER STANLEY TILLEKERATNE, DURING HIS VOTE OF THANKS FOR BHUTTO'S ADDRESS, REFERRED TO THE ISLAMIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF INDIA. IN BILATERAL CONTEXT, HOWEVER, ATMOSPHERE

OF BHUTTO VISIT IS WARM AND VERY FIRENDLY. PRESS
HAS GIVEN VISIT EXTENSIVE AND VERY FAVORABLE
COVERAGE WITH LAUDATORY ARTICLES ON PAKISTAN,
BHUTTO FAMILY AND CLOSENESS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN
TWO COUNTRIES.
VAN HOLLEN

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